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Tuesday, August 17, 1982

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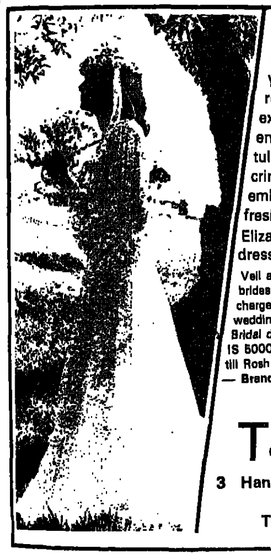

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The puppets are the output of a handicrafts group sponsored by Shalshelet, a new Jerusalem organization that gets couples to communicate by doing things together. *(Photos by Dan Landau)*

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

Greer Fay Cashman

EXPECTATIONS are often the pitfalls of marriage. Seventeenth century British author and clergyman Thomas Fuller warned: "Deceive not thyself by over-expecting happiness in the married estate. Remember, the nightingales which sing only some months in the spring, but commonly are silent when they have hatched their eggs."

Romantics view marriage as the culmination of love. A natural connection between the two was anything but obvious to those who drily observed, "Marriage is law, and love is instinct." Even less sympathetic to the romantics, Bertrand Russell maintained that "love as a relation between men and women was ruined by the... desire to make sure of the legitimacy of children".

In the Jewish world, arranged marriages were a time-honoured practice, and are still the custom in certian Orthodox circles. Sometimes the bride and groom may meet only once or twice before standing together under the wedding canopy. Emotional attachment doesn't have much of a chance prior to the nuptials, but it wasn't always this way in pious circles.

In talmudic times, before the destruction of the Second Temple the 15th of Av and the day of Atonement were traditionally marked in Jerusalem by providing opportunity for those of marriageable age to inspect the opposite sex. The young bachelors of the Holy City, dressed in white, would wander through the hills and valleys; and the maidens, also dressed in white, would go out and dance in the vineyards, singing: "Young man, raise your eyes and see whom you will choose for your wife."

In those days, boys were encouraged to marry at the age of 18, girls at 13. The talmudic sages did not recommend May-December marriages, warning that disparity in age was almost certain to cause strife in the household. They also advocated that a tall man should not marry a tall woman, lest their children be lanky; a short man should not marry a short woman, lest their children be midgets; a fair man should not marry a fair woman, lest their children be excessively fair; and a dark man should not marry a dark woman, lest their children should be excessively swarthy.

As for status, the sages cautioned men not to choose a wife of higher social status than his own, otherwise both she and her family might look down on him. However, a man is advised not to marry the daughter of an ignoramus.

WHETHER OR NOT romantic love exists in a marriage, in the final analysis, it's compatibility that counts. Two people who love each other madly can each have unconquerable habits that irritate one another. Eventually, their marriage will be in trouble, unless each finds a way of avoiding or ignoring, as the case may be, the source of contention.

An old Jewish proverb states that a man and a woman do not really know each other until they have consumed a sack of salt between them. Often, the irksome quirks which were not at all obvious during the courting period, surface during or soon after the honeymoon. They may be so petty that they are hypothetically laughable — unless you have to live with them.

Consider the husband offended by the sight of a dirty ashtray, whose wife is a heavy smoker and a casual housekeeper.

Or the olah who sees a deodorant as natural a part of the morning routine as using a toothbrush, while her husband argues that sweating is a natural function and only someone inordinately fussy would insist on suppressing and perfuming it.

Certain differences in taste, custom and habit are so widespread they have become the focus of jokes about the married state. Any person reading this will surely know at least one couple in which he insists on sleeping with the window open while she wants it closed (or, of course, vice versa).

Before embarking on matrimony, couples would do well to tell each other about those little things in life that they might mistakenly believe go without saying. Many a conflict would thus be calmly looked at before it assumes the proportions of an open battle.

His list of distastes may include:

- ☐ Sharing a pillow with a woman whose face is creamed and hair is in rollers.
- ☐ Coming home from work to find yesterday's dishes piled in the sink.
- ☐ Her pre-occupation with filing her nails.
- ☐ Her favourite foods.
- ☐ The time she spends talking on the telephone.
- ☐ The amount of money she spends on clothes.
- ☐ Her lack of punctuality.
- ☐ Her dependence on her mother.

She may be driven out of her mind by a man who:

- ☐ Sits around the house in his underwear.
- ☐ Scatters discarded newspapers on the floor.
- ☐ Spends money on devices and bargains they didn't need in the first place.
- ☐ Finds time for his friends, but not hers.
- ☐ Is a slave to the television set.
- ☐ Forever cites his mother as a paragon of the household arts.
- ☐ Lacks table manners.
- ☐ Won't share responsibilities around the house.

Both lists could be extended *ad infinitum*. To judge by the growing divorce rate in Israel (statistics indicate that 4,000 marriages will be terminated this year), it would appear that people in this country are not sufficiently prepared for marriage.

Whether a marriage is based on love, an escape from loneliness or the fulfilment of a religious precept, couples have to learn how to live together.

UNTIL THREE years ago, there was hardly any pre-marital counselling in Israel, except occasionally on the part of a rabbi who had been specifically asked by a couple to perform the wedding ceremony. Marriage may be one of the oldest and most popular of institutions, but it still remains a mystery of winding corridors. Now, Jerusalem couples at least, can turn to Shalshelet, whose aim is to improve the quality of life and prevent family breakdowns by helping about-to-be and already marrieds negotiate the inevitable disagreements and misunderstandings.

Shalshelet had its own problems in its bid to gain acceptance, but it is now recognized by the Religious Council of Jerusalem, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Jerusalem Municipality. The organization's greatest triumph was securing a permanent desk in the reception area of the Rabbinical Marriage Registration offices in Havatzelet Street.

Most of the members of the organization's board of directors are Orthodox, but they don't ram religious observance down anyone's throat. Their approach is traditional, but modern. The desk at the rabbinate is manned by volunteers who make it their business to give a warm welcome to each couple entering the reception area. The volunteers have also brightened up the place with curtains, flowers, pictures of ketubot and a coffee urn.

Any couple taking advantage of the Shalshelet's services is given a handsome mezuza as a wedding present — this being the external sign of a Jewish home.

Shalshelet's volunteers include rabbis, educators, social workers, psychologists and people who just want to make life easier for others.

Headquartered in Hechal Shlomo, Shalshelet conducts most of its projects in a converted bomb shelter in Shmuel Hanagid Street.

The shelter, which has been revamped to look as much as possible like a community centre, serves as a weekly meeting place for young and not-so-young couples, some of whom have acute communication problems.

Getting couples to communicate on an intellectual level is not always easy or even possible. Shalshelet's solution is to provide them with a common interest through handicraft classes, in which they learn to recycle discarded objects and to fashion them into both practical and decorative items for the home.

This gives them a common interest and helps to break down communication barriers. It also opens new vistas with "golden hands". Shulamit Goldfarb, who sets the tone for the handicraft classes says: "It's a challenge to the imagination, and it helps to develop creative abilities."

The bomb-shelter-community centre serves as an informal multi-purpose classroom, where couples discuss problems with each other and with guest lecturers, who talk to them about home-making, budgets, religion, interior decor, nutrition, child-rearing, social contacts inside and outside the home, do-it-yourself repairs, carpentry, etc.

Edna, a regular at these group sessions, says with satisfaction: "You can learn a lot through the lectures, and you often get valuable information that is not available to you elsewhere. It's terrific to see husbands and wives working side by side, making things for their homes. And the men are not ashamed to be seen working with a needle and thread."

THE CAMARADERIE within the group belies the number of problems that led each couple to join. There is no sense of tension.

"Most of us were very closed and inhibited when we came," states Moshe; "but gradually, we all learned to open up."

Dudu defines the wider ramifications of Shalshelet as "everything you wanted to know (about marriage) but never dared to ask." He points out that so many private problems, in one way or another, are general problems, which confront a lot of couples.

These issues are raised in group discussions, and as each couple realizes that their fears and doubts are shared by others, there is a relaxation in attitude and a more optimistic approach develops towards finding solutions.

Shalshelet also serves as a base for new friendships. "You get help; the programmes are interesting and you meet other young couples," says Aviva.

Activities have spread into some Jerusalem neighbourhoods. Aliza Herbst, a social psychologist who worked in a women's centre in Madison, Wisconsin before settling in Israel, set up a preventive therapy group in the suburb of Neve Ya'acov. Her observations of Israeli women gave her the impression that most don't find ways of fulfilling themselves while raising children.

The group she established consisted of young, pregnant women, most of them expecting first babies. She discovered that they were remarkably uninformed about pregnancy and childbirth. They were unaware of alternative childbirth methods, even though they were well-educated and usually working in jobs demanding professional qualifications.

Herbst persuaded husbands to attend sessions. Colleagues had warned her that there was not much likelihood that Israeli husbands would agree to participate, and initially she did encounter resistance. After a couple of sessions, however, all the husbands were as involved as were their wives.

Herbst encouraged couples to develop communication skills and stressed the significance of building neighbourhood support systems. She believes that young couples in Israel feel very isolated, because they have moved away from close-knit families and familiar environments.

The high cost of housing in Israel forces young couples to buy apartments in outlying areas, where apartments are cheaper. Unless they establish a neighbourhood support system, any marital problems they have will be intensified. "It takes a lot of the pressure off when you have other people to rely on," says Herbst.

She is now looking forward to repeating the Neve Ya'acov experiment elsewhere, but will extend the programme from nine to 12 sessions. "It takes time to develop group dynamics," she says, "and things would have been better if we had offered more sessions."

SHALSHELET recently lost the services of its co-ordinator Aharon Mandel, who trained as a psychotherapist and family counsellor at New York's Alfred Adler Institute. After many years of practice in his field, Mandel came to Israel three years ago. He was not sure that he would be up to handling other people's problems while involved in his own absorption process, and landed a job with the Ministry of Education's pedagogic centre, where he creates audio-visual Jewish educational material.

After making the adjustment from Brooklyn to Jerusalem, Mandel became interested in helping married couples with problems, a field in which he had been trained to work. Shalshelet was just beginning to make headway, and he more or less came in on the ground floor. He discovered that certain things in Israel were more accentuated than in the U.S., mainly due to economic difficulties and the lack of pre-marital guidance. Mandel refuses to be drawn into hypothetical cases, preferring to weigh each against its background and the people involved.

Aharon Mandel and Aliza Herbst of Shalshelet.

But there are some golden rules to a good marriage. Mandel's "Ten Commandments" are:

Thou shalt communicate.

Thou shalt love each other.

Thou shalt be honest with each other.

Thou shalt believe in each other.

Thou shalt share with each other.

Thou shalt learn how to argue and make peace.

Thou shalt feel secure as individuals and as a couple.

Thou shalt respect each other.

Thou shalt not be jealous of each other's accomplishments.

Thou shalt build a secure Jewish home.

Wherever there are two Jews there are three opinions, and Shalshelet, for all its good intentions and achievements, is no exception. Mandel does not advocate mixed marriages among different ethnic groups. "Ultimately, there will be mixed ethnic marriages" he says, "but as yet, we are not one people, and we accentuate differences more than similarities. Change will be by evolution not revolution. It requires education and it's a long-term process."

MANY PEOPLE believe that the divorce rate in Israel would be much higher than it already is were divorce procedures made easier. Refusal by a husband to grant a divorce or a wife to accept one has left thousands of people living in limbo, as rabbinical courts, unlike civil courts, do not exercise the right to decree divorces. A rabbinical tribunal, after hearing both sides of the case may give a decision in favour of the petitioner, but generally speaking, the rabbinical court will do nothing to enforce that decision. More often than not, the victims of this situation are women who live in loveless misery for years.

Mitzva, an organization primarily composed of Orthodox women, has been trying for some time to get the chief rabbis to place a more liberal interpretation on the Halacha, so that people who want to end their marriages will not have to endure traumas because spouses will not consent to a dissolution of the union.

A suggestion has even been made that bridegrooms write a "Bill of Divorce" *(Get)* at the same time as the ketuba is being prepared, and that this be left with the rabbinate, to be used at its discretion should the need arise. The introduction of such a custom would be of significant benefit to the deserted Jewish wife, who cannot remarry without the testimony of a reliable witness that her husband has died.

Pessy Krausz, a British social worker who pioneered in Shalshelet, does not want to consider the thought of divorce when talking to an engaged couple. There are enough provisions in the ketuba to protect the wife, she said, and rabbis do deal successfully with the problems of deserted wives.

Mandel also favours a positive approach, but is less dogmatic about it than Krausz.

What bothers him, as an observant Jew, is the loosening of the framework of Jewish tradition. He says he has heard from single people that there is a lot of "free love" in Israel, resulting in a misguided belief that there is no need to get married. People who haven't been married think that the physical relationship is the main aspect of marriage, he says, and if they already have a sexual relationship, they see no reason to get tied down. "Sex, to some people," says Mandel, "signifies the highest form of communication. The problem here is a lack of family life."

Even when everything is kosher, the pattern of Jewish family existence is threatened by the realities of life in Israel. "The kids are in the streets; the fathers are at work until all hours with two jobs, and sometimes three, and when they're not working, they're at war or doing their reserve duty in the army; and the mothers who are left at home are antagonistic about carrying the whole burden." The tensions that build up from these situations are the kill factors in a marriage.

"Today, we're trying to save marriages because the existence of our people depends on family life," Mandel says. "Family" is the operative word. The first of the 613 precepts of Judaism is "Be fruitful and multiply." Given the economic climate in Israel, desires for career advancement and the pursuit of personal pleasures, the true concept of family is disintegrating in this country. Large families are the exception rather than the rule.

Mandel says there is considerable evidence suggesting some 600,000 abortions were performed in Israel in the first 20 years of the state. Small families may be the norm in a progressive life style, but Mandel defines progress as "civilization heading from one darkness to another."

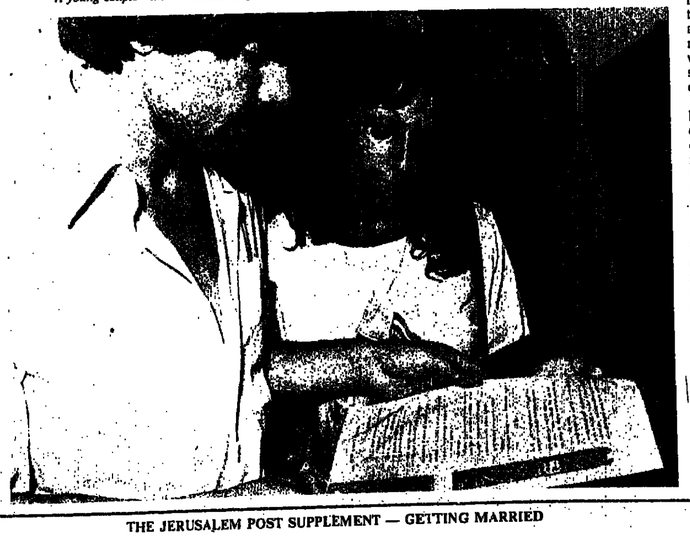
In teaching the lessons on family relationships, he frequently refers to the Bible, which abounds with examples of both good and bad marriages. "There are plenty of lessons we can learn from our sources," he says. "We don't turn to them often enough."

Mandel is currently torn between his desire to create new Jewish educational projects and his wish to continue serving the needs of married couples who need guidance. No longer able to spare the time to co-ordinate the activities of Shalshelet, he will remain on the administrative board.

He is anxious to see more Shalshelet nuclei in urban neighbourhoods, based on the results of what they have achieved to date. "People are more assured and closer to each other and more open to discussing problems. They have talked about things in group sessions that they previously wouldn't discuss with each other." To Mandel, this is a healthy sign.

Even healthier, is the interest being displayed in Shalshelet by municipalities outside Jerusalem. Pessy Krausz reports that negotiations are currently in progress with two municipalities, and others have made their interest known.

A young couple with the mezuza they received from Shalshelet and an explanation of its significance



Dressing for the grand day

SOMETHING OLD, something new, something borrowed and something blue. So many of us have grown up with this ancient bridal chant ticking in the recesses of our minds, that no matter what we wore for the purpose of tying the knot, we were careful to remember in the flurry of preparations to get hold of a blue garter, to borrow a veil or a bracelet and to use an old lace handkerchief. If we were married outside of Israel, the rest of our finery was generally new.

The source of bridal custom is obscure, but it is thought to have originated in England. It could just as easily have started in the Middle East, where blue is a colour used to ward off the evil eye. Borrowed garments are an ancient tradition, introduced to avoid putting the poor to shame. Old things of course, are reminders of ties to the past, and new things symbols of the future.

Moroccan brides sometimes wear a traditional blue gown at a prenuptial feast the night before the wedding, and quite often it's a gown that has been passed from mother to daughter for several generations, but this is not the dress the bride wears for her change of status.

Until this year, it was almost impossible for an Israeli bride to walk into a shop and buy a bridal gown off the rack, unless she wanted something relatively plain and simple, which could just as easily serve as a hostess gown or a comfortable evening dress. The Maskit range for some time included long white dresses, but the skirts don't have the fullness usually associated with a bridal gown.

Two summers ago, when white became one of the key fashion colours, and romantic styles came back into vogue, with voluminous lace and ribbon trimming, tiered, ruffled and frilled skirts, there was a slight lull in the bridal wear hire business, because so many of the new silhouettes with their fancy trims were ideal wedding gear and less expensive than the hire charges of most bridal salons.

ONE OF the pioneers of off-the-rack bridal wear was Dominique, whose founder-designer Esther Isakoff has always specialized in fantasy creations: Isakoff was working on layers, frills, pointed hemlines, lace overlays and bouffant sleeves long before the romantic revival. But her inspirations are somewhat far out for a conventional bride, and not everyone has the courage or inclination to wear them.

The Dominique range was never really classified in the bridal category, and thus until the advent of Toutay Bar four years ago, no Israeli firm was mass producing wedding dresses per se. Like Dominique, Ivor Adler was manufacturing cream and white gowns that were snapped up by quite a lot of Tel Aviv brides, but were too daring for most bridal tastes.

The brainchild of Natan and Rachel Avidan, Toutay Bar produces more than 800 styles and is exporting well to EEC countries, especially England. Its creations take up a major portion of the display areas in the bridal departments of such prestige department stores as Harrods and Selfridges. All the dresses are made from sheer imported fabrics — voiles and chiffons, combined with exquisite laces and silk and satin ribbons.

Lace-trimmed wedding dress by Toutay Bar

Danit Landau

Toutay Bar would have been content with its export markets and its limited local clientele, who buy from the shop adjoining its Netanya factory, but for an accident of fate. Toutay Bar also manufactures blouses and skirts for domestic distribution. One of its largest outlets is Stock in Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda Street. When the management of Stock held an exclusive fashion show earlier this year, Toutay Bar was asked to supply some wedding gowns to dress up the event. Encouraged by the enthusiasm of the audience, Stock and Co. decided to retain the collection and thus expand its range of merchandise.

Toutay Bar wedding gowns are also on display at Akshalot in Haifa, and the Avidans are currently negotiating with retailers in Tel Aviv.

Prices compared to the cost of hiring, are extremely reasonable, averaging between IS3,500 and IS6,000 plus VAT, which is more or less the same price range of the hire salons. Moreover, anyone who is prepared to make the trip to 3 Hanotea Street, Netanya (less than five minutes walk from the central bus station) can have a gown made to measure in any style for only a fraction more money than an off-the-rack gown.

The most expensive dress, incorporating the costliest fabrics and an eight-metre-wide skirt will be made to measure for IS8,000, including VAT. Any bride who deals directly with the Avidans may borrow all her accessories free of charge.

The choice includes ultra-formal, high-necked Victorian styles, Tudor country maid inspirations, a sophisticated peasant-look, Spanish colonial and many others. There are also bridal separates for mix-and-match formal wear after the wedding.

BECAUSE Toutay Bar supplies its overseas outlets with bridesmaids' and flower girls' dresses, it has placed some samples of these in the Netanya shop. All the creations are designed by Rachel Avidan and Esther Egozi, and every gown includes a substantial amount of handwork.

The Avidans believe that the mother of the bride has been sadly neglected in Israel, and are currently in the process of creating new lines for all the women folk gathered under the chuppa.

WHEN YOU ask a proprietor of an Israeli bridal salon why the majority of brides hire their gowns, you get the typical Jewish rejoinder in which a question is answered by a question. "What would they do with such a dress afterwards?"

A hired dress has a short rack-life. Few salons rent out the same dress more than five times. Flimsy fabrics can survive only so many trips to the dry cleaner, and underarm perspiration stains are difficult to remove. Hemlines come in for frequent changes, because they invariably get stepped on, torn and soiled. They are either taken up for a shorter bride or flounced for a taller bride, both of whom remain blissfully unaware of previous damage.

One of the newest Tel Aviv hire salons is Lorenzo (on the corner of Allenby and Bialik), whose proprietors took the risk of competing with a bevy of veterans in the field on the basis of changing tastes. The Lorenzo people contend that even though the dress itself may be short-lived among their competitors, the style is enduring and is repeated again and again with no sense of novelty. Their aim is to keep pace with updated trends, and so they are currently featuring revamped art nouveau.

Lorenzo's regal decor, with carpeted floors, crystal chandeliers and elegant furniture, is a fitting backdrop to the aura of majesty accompanying any woman in bridal array. The significance of atmosphere is largely ignored by the majority of salons.

At Princess Wedding Dresses in Ben Yehuda Street, Tel Aviv, clients have an option to hire or buy. Hire prices are in shekel equivalents of $120 to $160, and purchase prices are in the vicinity of $250 to-$ 280. The bride does not have to make up her mind whether she is renting or buying until the day she picks up the dress. Provision for the option is made in a contractual agreement signed by both the firm and the bride when she places her order.

Every Princess dress is fashioned out of top quality Swiss cotton lace. Most have camisole tops and flared skirts. There are also dresses with sleeves for religiously observant brides, and for those who are not, Princess provides a short cape to be worn under the chuppa, should the officiating rabbi take exception to the departure from halachic strictures on the mode of attire. Jewish law pertaining to modesty demands that a female be covered from the collar-bone to the elbow, and that her skirts should extend below the knee.

PRINCESS is operated by a husband-and-wife team, Yehoshua and Irene Stern. He negotiates and she designs. Yehoshua Stern is the third generation in his family in the wedding gown trade. His grandfather migrated from Hungary to Mexico, where he opened a bridal wear shop, subsequently taken over by Yehoshua's father. Yehoshua and Irene had ten years of experience in Mexico before opening their Tel Aviv venture six years ago.

They concentrate on one particular kind of fabric, because it is strong, durable, attractive and easy to launder. Close to 80 per cent of their clients buy the dresses, which can be shortened and later worn as sun or cocktail dresses, or can be left in the original length and adorned with a coloured sash. The huge quantity of material in each gown allows for numerous make-over possibilities.

Princess has a policy of never renting out a gown more than twice, even though the dress has an above-average life-span. Both rental and purchase costs are reduced on a dress that has been worn before, the second bride has to pay only the difference between rental and sales charges on the original price, approximately between IS2,500 and IS3,500 if she wants to buy, and considerably less if she's going to bring the dress back.

What happens after a dress has been worn twice? The Sterns are observant Jews who practise the time-honoured custom of providing tzeddaka for poor brides. They send the gowns to religious institutions in B'nei Brak, for distribution to girls who can't afford to pay for a decent wedding dress.

Most of the dresses are made to measure, and the bride has two fittings before she takes the dress away.

Yehoshua Stern will never allow a browsing bride to try on a dress if she hasn't been to check out other salons first. "We don't want to pressure her, and we want her to be sure of what she wants, both in terms of style and price."

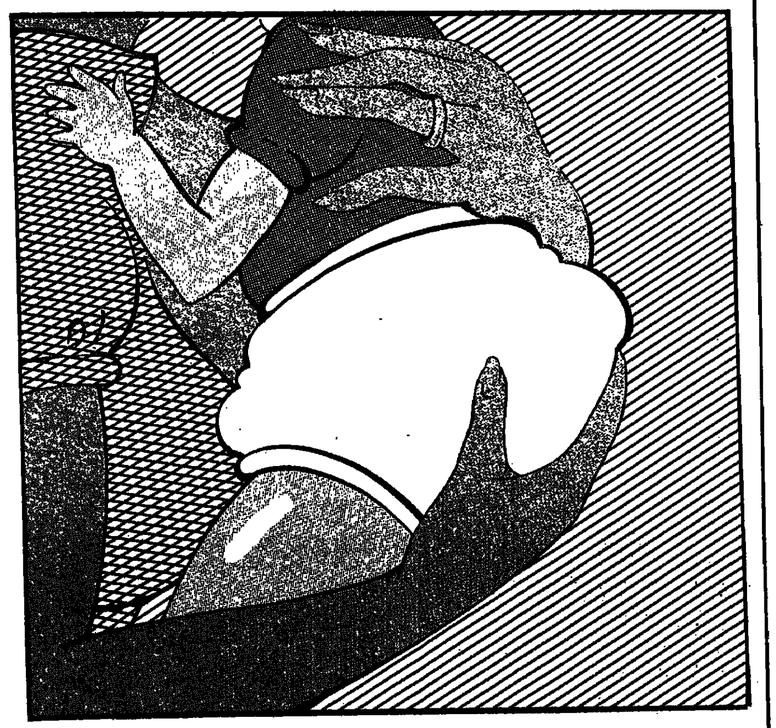
Princess also has a selection of ready-made short wedding dresses and suits retailing for the equivalent of $80. Like Toutay Bar, Princess lends accessories to the bride free of charge.

The Israel Consumer Council survey as presented in the television programme, Kolbotek:

ATA nappies — strongest and cheapest of all brands tested

This symbol means:

- Honest trading
- Full value for money
- Guaranteed quality
- No compromises
- Quality controlled products
- The best raw materials
- Exchange if not totally satisfied
- Care in the finishing



It's obvious — nappies have to be strong and resistant. ATA nappies are the strongest.

It's obvious — nappies have to be soft and absorbent. ATA nappies are soft and highly absorbent.

It's obvious — nappies can't be expensive. ATA nappies are the least expensive of their kind. Yes, it's obvious — ATA-quality.

TEST RESULTS	
Nappy strength	Very good
Absorbency	Good
Recommended retail price (for six nappies)	IS 245
Weight	Good
Threads check (in every 100 sq.cm.)	Good
Warp and weft shrinkage test	Good
Size	As declared

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Mixed marriage

Joan Davis

TO MY MIND, there is no lovelier Israeli wedding than that in the religious kibbutz: a synagogue ceremony, the bride and groom driving away in a flower-decked tractor and returning to greet the guests, gathered on the green lawns. Everyone eats, drinks and makes merry, enjoys sketches, songs and dances hour-long horas. The celebration is entertaining and esthetic. "You join the Nahal, find yourself a kibbutznik and marry him there," we used to tell our daughter, teasingly.

When the time came, however, she opted for national service in a Negev development town. The families of the predominantly Oriental community earned her admiration for their close-knit family relationships, devotion to each other and filial respect. The efforts and sacrifices of the older generation, to provide for their sabra children a better education and life than they had in Morocco, while at the same time proudly retaining their culture and traditions, impressed our daughter. She became deeply involved in their struggle for advancement and integration.

That "deep involvement" was to prove a lasting one, for along with the certificate testifying to completion of her national service, she was to bring home a more permanent and precious treasure of the little township, one of its sons — her husband-to-be.

A friend of ours commented that this was "the ideal culmination to aliya — the ultimate in Zionism." A gap is being bridged between two of the many cultures in the melting pot of Israel. The union of two sabras, one Ashkenazi and the other Sephardi is the Israel we want to build, a joyous reminder that we are one people. But growing together while planning a wedding, when each family has its own cherished customs, representing widely different tastes, inevitably tries the patience of both sides.

Even simple communication became a complicated affair, when it was making wedding arrangements by telephone, the line seeking to connect two worlds, one in Jerusalem, the other in the Negev.

Our future son-in-law's family is highly respected in the community and this is to be their first wedding. Rather like the recent royal wedding in England, everyone is waiting and watching to see what they will do. Economic considerations must obviously preclude the transportation of their 800 guests to Jerusalem, and so they are compelled to cut down to a quarter of that number. They are disappointed, even a little ashamed. We compensate with concessions of our own. We will conform to convention and retract our RSVP reply cards. Invitations will be issued to "Family Cohen" and "Family Levi," who may, at their discretion (or indiscretion) bring one, three, more or none of their junior Cohens and Levis. Neither we nor the caterer will know until the moment of truth arrives, and we find ourselves with too many or too few places and portions.

WE WOULD have liked to envisage our guests, seated and silent around the bridal canopy during the ceremony. Later there would be a light buffet and dancing to muted music, followed by a festive family dinner. That is not feasible: most of the guests will come from out-of-town or even from abroad, and cannot be expected to take a bite and bus back home, while on their side, the *immediate* family number a mere one hundred-odd. They, for their part, are accustomed to mammoth marathons, mountains of Moroccan delicacies. They are adamant on only one point. The meal must start with fish.

We agree readily enough, and realize only much later, with a sort of sick horror, that while we had naturally thought of gefilte fishballs in jellied, chilled sauce, they were thinking of a whole fish in hot chili sauce.

A caterer is called in for consultations. Surely he, a man of experience in such matters, will come up with a compromise.

"Fillet," he announces promptly. "I'll make you fillet."

I can't imagine fillet made Moroccan-style, but he's the expert, not I.

"Fillet of *which* fish?" I query suspiciously. After all, fillet could be a filleted sprat or a filleted salmon.

"Fillet," he repeats resignedly, in a tone implying that he has long ago learned to deal with uninitiated idiots. Just to be sure that this one really understands, he explains patiently, "Fillet *is* a fish."

Fillet, it would seem, is the fish to fill the gap. This wedding will not flounder. We have found the "solution", which the European guests, too, will eat — with relish!

We must still resolve the order of the service and which *nussah* will prevail. Whose rabbis will officiate? Will the chuppa be outside or indoors?

Maybe the bride will yet overcome her ingrained British reserve and agree to participate in a *hinna* party, at which she will wear traditional Moroccan costume — and let herself be smeared with henna, while the guests dance around her, warbling to ward off the evil eye.

Differing ethnic backgrounds and traditions create difficulties, but they are not insurmountable. Coming together on these preliminary problems, with mutual goodwill and give-and-take, must surely serve as a firm foundation for a blessed and beautiful life together.

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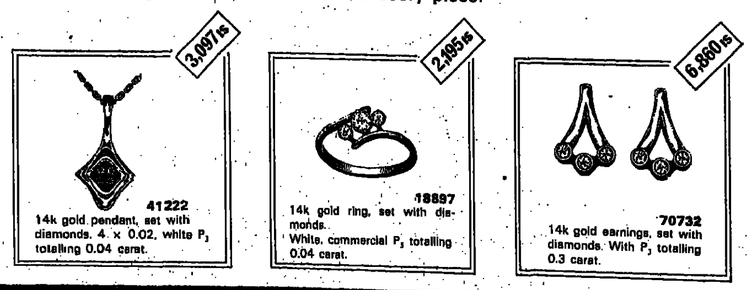

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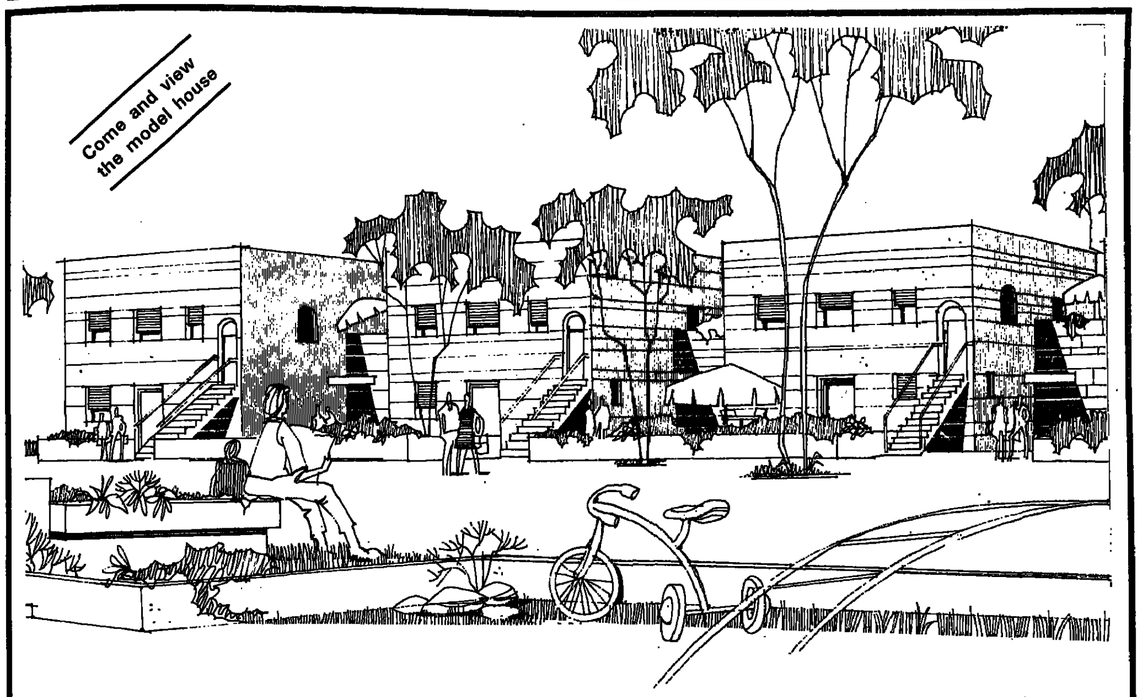

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Joseph Wolfsthal arranging an Arabia Ruska dinner service in his Intira store. (Dan Landau)

GIVING AND GETTING

Gita Baruch

WEALTHY BRIDES receive costly gifts. No one wants to be judged wanting in the value of a gift, and there is also that keeping up with the Joneses element; people attending a lavish wedding feel that they must reciprocate with a gift matching the standards set by their host.

Brides who can afford a less than lavish wedding appreciate, as much as anyone else, receiving something with a touch of luxury and status. Thanks to the gift list system being adopted by more and more Israeli shops, they can now receive luxury gifts without putting a strain on the pocketbooks of friends and family.

This kind of gift-buying, long popular abroad, makes it possible to contribute to a set of china or silverware with a place setting or a single serving piece. Besides bringing luxury items within many people's price range, this system also offers the comforting knowledge that you have selected something that is exactly what the couple wants.

Danish Plus and Levinson (Jerusalem) were among the early birds to comprehend both the wisdom and profitability of the gift list. They were followed closely by Intira (Jerusalem); and now the Hamashbir chain of department stores has come up with a gift list programme that offers incentives as well as variety.

Intira, in Rehov Keren Kayemet, is one of Jerusalem's favourite gift centres, and with good reason. Proprietor Joseph Wolfsthal is Israel's sole distributor for the wonderful range of stoneware, ceramics, enamel and glassware manufactured by Arabia of Finland. The world-renowned Finnish company has been producing household ware for more than a century, and prides itself on combining esthetics with practicality.

Wolfsthal never overcrowds his display window. Each set or individual item is surrounded by plenty of space, so it can be seen to best advantage. There are tasteful display stands throughout the store, where dinner sets, glassware and stove and oven ware are shown in a way that draws attention to their craftsmanship.

All the Arabia designs reflect unmistakable, clean Scandinavian lines. The most popular in the stoneware series is *Ruska*, coloured in the traditional stoneware browns. It has a solid look to it and features sturdy mug-shaped cups.

Threatening to outdo *Ruska* is *Pudas Arctica*, the newest development from the Arabia kiln.

Leo Wissman

Fashioned with the delicate thinness of fine porcelain and the durability of stoneware, it is chip-proof and almost shatter-proof. It literally has to be thrown with heavy impact in order to break, and even then, it may only crack.

Available in pristine white or in white with hand-painted decoration in shades of blue, beige and brown, the complete set includes flat dinner plates, deep dinner plates, cereal or soup bowls, coffee cups and saucers, tea cups and saucers, egg cups, creamers, sugar bowl, coffee pot, tea pot, baking dishes with or without lids, sauce boat, hors d'oeuvre plate, round and oval serving platters — an abundance of gift choices.

All the items in this and all Arabia sets may be purchased individually. Each and every item is oven-proof, micro-wave oven-proof, freezer-proof and dishwasher-proof and resistant to all forms of food acids. Thus the same dishes may be used for cooking and serving, and if a dish will visit the freezer in between, that's no problem at all.

Few of the Arabia patterns disappear from production, so a dinner service for six or eight can be expanded gradually by any bride who does a lot of entertaining. Whether you need some extra platters or additional place settings in the pattern you have, Intira can always provide them. If they're not in stock, a cable to Finland will do the trick.

Intira also carries certain lines from England, Norway and Denmark, as well as from Finnish firms other than Arabia. Fancy trays and kettles, stemmed cake plates, punch and trifle bowls, pots and pans, candlesticks, vases, ashtrays, soufflé dishes, fruit bowls and attractive pot plant containers are just some of the gift choices that should make any bride happy.

If you can't make up your mind, leave it to the young couple. Intira will give you a gift voucher. You decide on how much you want to spend, and the young couple can come in after the wedding to make their own choice. This is ideal when several people are chipping in for a gift. The voucher can be worth a goodly sum, making it possible for the newlyweds to acquire their heart's desire without having to add anything from their own pockets.

NOT ALL young couples have a casual approach. Some hope to set up house with objects they can prize such as a silver tea service or crystal wine decanters that were beloved family possessions in their childhood homes. For formal gifts of this kind, Nechmad, in Jerusalem's King George Street, has an excellent selection.

Israelis used to be biased against goods from the Far East, but these have improved tremendously, since the Far East started competing seriously on world markets.

Far Eastern merchandise is still cheaper than similar imports from Europe and America, and even, unfortunately, than locally made products; and the quality is frequently as good and sometimes superior. The widest selection of Far Eastern goods can be seen at Class shops throughout the country.

People who want a wedding gift that is not run-of-the-mill might turn to Na'aman, the Koor subsidiary producing fine porcelain. Na'aman has now added to its range with a series of collectibles. The series was initiated by "Flowers of Our Country," designed by Bracha Avigat, and has since expanded to include a Passover Plate designed by Shmuel Katz, based on traditional Jewish themes, with colours representing sun, sea and earth. The order of conduct of the Seder is lettered in Hebrew around the circumference of the plate and the positioning of the Paschal foods needed for the Seder is clearly marked in English and Hebrew. The artist obviously had a problem with "Haroseth," the only word that is transliterated. Yosef Givol, Na'aman's general manager, is on the lookout for more talent for the Na'aman collectibles, and promises that the series will continue to grow.

TOWELS are just what a couple setting up house needs, but some of us who hail from other countries have balked at buying them in Israel, because we couldn't find those extra large beach towels, which can be wrapped sarong-style around the body. They're now available at Home Stores in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, singly or in sets of different sizes, bearing the Pierre Balmain logo. Home Stores specialize in bed linens, quilts, napery and towels, and fall within the category of a household linens boutique.

Should boutique prices be beyond your budget, take a look at some of the new print designs in bedding manufactured by Kitan. They are as attractive as anything you will find abroad, and place much less strain on the purse strings.

GLAMOUR items are natural choices for wedding gifts, but there are many other useful and practical things just marrieds can use, but seldom get: a tool box, a ladder, a box of various cleaning agents (furniture polish, scouring powder, floor cleaner, grease remover, anti-rust agent, turpentine, silver polish, room deodorizer, etc.), rolling pin, kneading board, kitchen gadgets, brooms, coat hangers, curtain fabric — all part and parcel of most households, yet neglected as gift considerations.

Furniture items are usually the province of a couple's parents or what is bought with those wedding gifts that came in envelopes. More than any other household item, furniture should be purchased selectively. Few couples change their furniture more than once throughout the whole of their married lives, changing the look of the living room or a bedroom by adding items over the years. So if it's something you're going to be stuck with for a lifetime, don't buy second best or worse, because it's the only thing you think you can afford. It's a far better idea to buy piece by piece, but to buy good quality. Most furniture retailers have long-term payment plans, and, providing that you meet the terms of your agreement faithfully, will often ease conditions for a second purchase before you finish paying off your first.

If you know of a carpenter who is reliable, custom-made furniture is ideal, but it's at least 20 per cent more expensive than ready-made, and much more than that if you opt for solid wood instead of chipboard or sandwich, which is the norm in Israel.

TEL AVIV is teeming with retail furniture outlets, mainly in and around Herzl Street, Bograshov and Ben Yehuda, where you can see rustic country styles, imitation Louis XV, Scandinavian styles, Regency-inspired designs, tropicana et *et al.* A new multi-storey furniture complex has opened in the vicinity of Shalom Tower, with each storey devoted to furniture of a different category.

The Nobel complex may cause some headaches to competitors with its price policy. The firm's interior decor consultants draw the room for which the furniture is intended with the pieces placed in accordance with the agreement reached with the client. This protects the client from blindly signing a contract and hoping for the best, and enables Nobel to maintain a good reputation. When you leave the store, you know exactly what you're getting and how it will relate to the room in your apartment.

Specialty items in furniture can be obtained at The Furniture Club in Bograshov Street, established by veteran furniture dealers Naphtali Nager and Sons, who for many years have been doing business under the Aronomit trade name. The Furniture Club stocks the best of Made in Israel furniture and also has a consultancy service.

Jerusalemites in search of something special single out Leo Wissman, who is somewhat of a legend in the city's furniture history. A master furniture-maker who learned his craft in Germany, Wissman has been in the business for well over half a century. For his contribution to the furniture industry in this country, he has been named a Worthy of Israeli Industry.

Now close to 80, Wissman still works in his huge factory and showroom, part of which he, his wife and sons set up less than three years ago. Wissman is not above rolling up his sleeves to help one of his employees achieve the desired results on a piece of furniture. In his younger years, Wissman was the best-known custom craftsman in Jerusalem. Today, his showroom areas are stocked with a large variety of furniture for every room in the house, as well as office furniture.

Wissman uses superior woods, some of which are not available in other shops. The factory continues to produce custom lines, but mainly for hotels and public institutions. Located in Derech Beit Lehem, not far from the Talpiot Industrial Zone, the Wissman concern sets a high standard for the other furniture showrooms in this area. He's the first one you see on the way in.

It's customary for bride and groom to give each other gifts, usually jewelry. This may be seen as an investment as much as an adornment. For low-cost 14-karat and 18-karat gold set with diamonds and other precious stones, the Israel Jewelry Exchange, with branches in 16 towns and cities across the country, offers difficult-to-resist values.

Thirty per cent is lopped off the list price if you pay in cash, and if you can't afford an outright payment, there are seven different instalment schemes to suit your convenience. Each item carries a warranty. Should the stone happen to fall out, the Jewelry Exchange will replace it at its own cost. An item ordered at one branch may be picked up at any other branch in the country at no extra charge.

Also worth exploring is Adipaz in Jerusalem, which has a retail division in its Talpiot plant, where you can buy at prices just slightly above wholesale. Adipaz specialize in gold chains, and is the largest manufacturer of gold chains in the Middle East. The company produces other jewelry items, but in lesser quantities.

CATERING establishments are vying with each other to be chosen for bridal banquets. Special deals include discount and even free honeymoon trips abroad. But there's always a catch, either a minimum number of banquet guests or a minimum number of relatives and friends occupying rooms at a certain hotel. What you get in addition to what you order is not a straight-out goodwill gesture. You have to do your bit too.

The Dan Hotel chain has a honeymoon package including a free suite for the bride and groom, champagne breakfast in the bridal suite on the morning after the wedding, full day tour of Jerusalem and honeymoon lunch at the King David Hotel, plus 10 per cent discount at stores in the Dan hotels, providing that ten rooms or more in the Dan hotels are occupied by family or friends of the bridal couple.

There is also a Dan honeymoon package that does not require the banquet to be held at a Dan Hotel though it does not apply to the King David. You just have to make sure, when making your hotel reservations, that you get a Dan honeymoon voucher. It entitles you to four nights in any Dan hotel or the first night in the Dan Tel Aviv or the Dan Carmel and the remaining three nights in the Dan Caesaria, the Dan Accadia or the Dan Netanya.

The Dan honeymoon package can be booked through the Dan Tel Aviv and is charged at bed-and-breakfast rates for the first night and half board for the remaining nights. The offer includes preferred rooms, champagne and a cold platter on the wedding night and two free drinks at the bar and baskets of fruit in the room on the remaining nights.

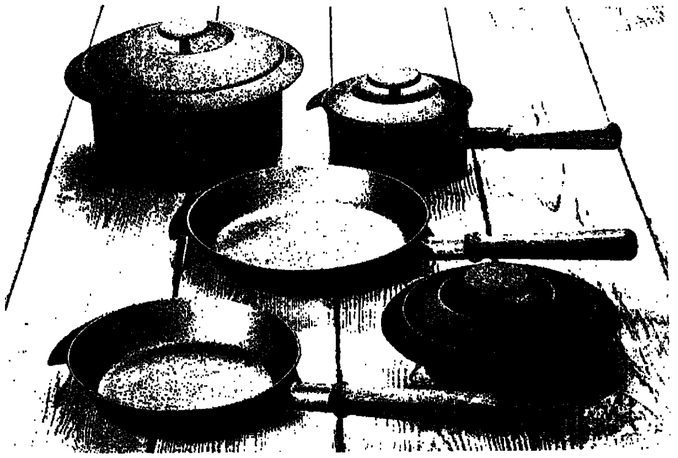
Most four- and five-star hotels offer enticements for the privilege of catering the wedding or hosting the honeymooners or both. The Hilton hotels go a step further and give the couple a meal on the house on their first wedding anniversary if the wedding banquet was catered at or by the Hiltons.

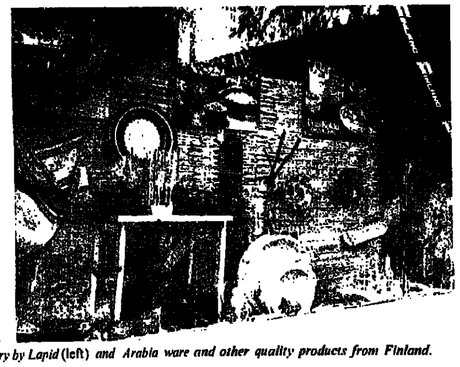
CHARTER 55 offers an interesting package for those who choose Shulhan David on Mount Zion for the wedding supper. If you have 200 or more guests, the package deal includes tickets for two to any Charter 55 destination in Europe. Moreover, the more guests you have, the less you have to pay per head, and the more valuable the gift from Charter 55. For 400 guests, you pay as little as $8.95 per head, and in addition to the flight tickets, you get a week's honeymoon in a European hotel, with Charter 55 footing the bill for bed and breakfast.

As a venue, Shulhan David sells itself, without the travel incentives. The Arab style architecture and the spacious courtyard with a superb view of the Old City are preferable to many halls, where neither decor nor view are impressive.

If you have a large enough private home at your disposal, you don't have to go to the expense of hiring a hall. Mi V'mi Catering Services of Tel Aviv will cater indoor and outdoor weddings. Their arrangement takes into account the provision of waiters and waitresses, fancy serving dishes, extensive menus, trestle tables, table cloths, marquees, etc.

Or you can save yourself the catering expenses by following the example of one enterprising Jerusalem bride. She asked her closest friends to prepare dishes of their choosing for a buffet reception, at the home of yet another friend. The food was appetizing, plentiful and a welcome change from the usual wedding fare.





Above: *cast iron ware.* Below: *crockery by Lapid* (left) *and Arabia ware and other quality products from Finland.*

Marriage Go-Round

Rebecca Morris

THE WESTERN visitor or immigrant to Israel would do well to ask a few questions about what is in store before attending an Israeli wedding. In particular, this might prevent the embarrassment of being over-dressed. Formal weddings are rare in Israel. The bride is usually in full regalia, but her mother and the groom's mother more often than not choose something simple and practical, which will not have to be confined to the back of the closet after the grand event.

Likewise, the groom takes a practical approach to his attire. If he has no use for a suit in his future life, he isn't likely to waste the money just to wear one under the chuppa. Even if he does wear a suit, it certainly won't be a cutaway or a tuxedo. It will be a business suit, which will serve him in good stead where appearances influence impressions.

One seldom sees bridal attendants in Israel. Matrons of honour, bridesmaids, flower girls and their male counterparts are virtually unknown, as are other overseas traditions. Few Israeli brides approach the canopy to the strains of Mendelsohn's *Wedding March*, nor do they arrive at the site of the wedding in a chauffeur-driven limousine with white tulle ribbons across the bonnet.

In Ashkenazi communities, the bridal march in Israel usually has a hassidic beat; and in Sephardi communities, the music is frequently drowned out by female relatives and guests ululating their joy.

The bridal "carriage" can vary from a small four-seater to a tow truck. In either case, the body of the vehicle is most often festooned with flowers and balloons, and occasionally the bonnet is bedecked by a papier maché Star of David.

In many parts of the world, it is the bride's prerogative to be late, so that she can make a grand entrance when all the guests are already assembled. In Israel, the rabbi is more inclined to be late than the bride, and will turn up for an afternoon wedding just long enough before sunset to permit the ceremony to take place according to the Hebrew calendar date listed on the ketuba. An evening wedding can commence any time up to two hours later than the hour stated on the invitation.

WHETHER Orthodox or not, brides in Israel are queens for a day and many of them receive their guests (and their gifts) while seated on a makeshift throne. Orthodox weddings tend to be more formal than secular, depending on the degree of orthodoxy. The knitted skull cap (*kippa sruga*) set, if one can generalize, go in for casual dress and don't object to mixed seating.

Among the more devout, almost every male is dressed in a dark suit if not a *kapota* frock coat and the elegantly bewigged women are all in long-sleeved dresses, whatever the weather. Men and women are seated separately, sometimes in separate rooms or in a large hall divided by a curtain or tall pot plants. The bride is the only woman permitted to enter the male domain, and then only for the mitzva dance and the recitation of the seven blessings.

Catering at orthodox weddings is almost always a sit-down affair with at least three courses. Venues for Orthodox weddings used to be relatively drab, since the participants were more concerned about the standard of kashrut than the glamour of the surroundings. Times are changing though, as more and more hotels are going in for *glatt kasher* catering.

Hotels are among the few places where guests can take the weight off their feet during the ceremony. Just about everywhere else, guests are forced to stand, and can not always be sure of a seat once the food is served. This is because budget-minded Israelis go in for buffets more than for sit-down dinners, and guests have to weigh their priorities in grabbing a seat or a plate.

The most difficult place to find a seat is at the rabbinate, a favourite locale for thrifty weddings. There's no room for a band, so if there's music, it's likely to be coming from a lone accordionist. The chuppa dominates the centre of the room, and along one wall stands a trestle table from which guests can select soft drinks, cold cuts, dips, a couple of salads, pita and perhaps some cake. A few chairs are distributed around the other walls, but unless it's a very small wedding, most of the guests will spend the whole time standing.

FOR COMFORT and enjoyment, nothing beats a kibbutz wedding. Nearly everyone on the kibbutz pitches in with the flower arrangements, the food and the music, with no thought of skimping on anything. There are plenty of chairs and benches, and if not, one can always sit on the grass. Since the newlyweds are usually going to remain on the kibbutz (his or hers), there is a delightful custom of scooping up the couple on the back of a flower-adorned tractor and depositing them at the front door of their new home, with guests singing and dancing while following the tractor.

The North African communities have a special knack for celebrations, and even taking a bride to the ritual bath is a major event. An Ashkenazi bride off to the *mikva* is usually accompanied by her mother, perhaps a married sister, an aunt, a grandmother or her best friend. An oriental bride has an entourage of women folk who invade the waiting room laden with baskets of food and a jar of henna for good luck. And they don't keep their joy to themselves. Both the food and the henna are shared with everyone else in the room, and when the bride-to-be emerges from the water, scrubbed and shining, the merriment knows no bounds with singing, hand-clapping and ululating.

Dress at the wedding itself ranges from the drab to the dazzling. The tables are literally groaning with Middle Eastern delicacies. Even when a professional caterer has been hired, some extra specialties have been added by women from both the bride's and the groom's families, and the bride's father provides a lavish supply of alcoholic beverages.

Dancing with joy. At right, a kibbutz bridal couple being driven off in a tractor.

In his book, *A History of Jewish Costume*, the late Alfred Rubens presented some glorious examples of North African bridal attire, incorporating centuries of tradition to which the Jews of those countries remained faithful since the expulsion from Spain in 1492. There are many similarities between the 15th century Spanish costumes and those of later eras in Algeria and Morocco. Sadly, these traditions have been shed with the assimilation of North African immigrants into Israeli society.

Insofar as adornment is concerned, the only tradition to which they still cling is the profusion of gold chains and bracelets. It was a custom in North African countries for men to deck out the women in their families with gold and fine jewels. Even among the poorest sectors of Israel's Oriental communities, most married women have gold assets far in excess of a wedding band.

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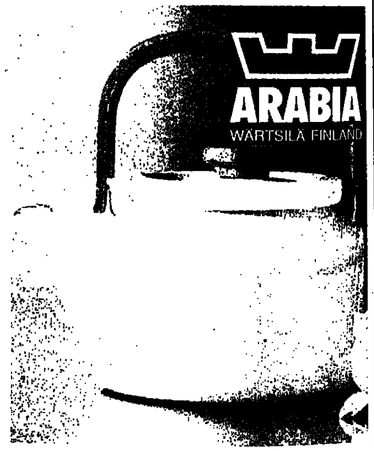

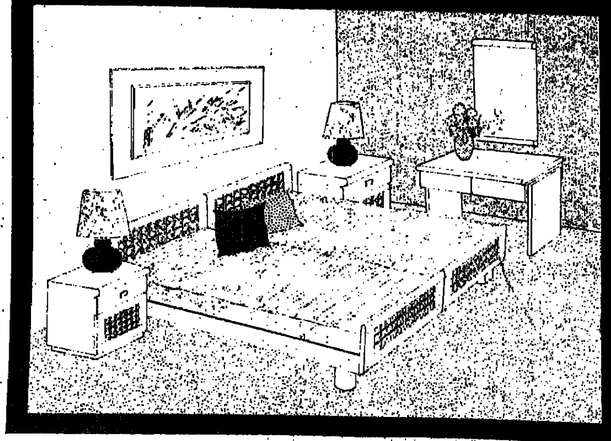

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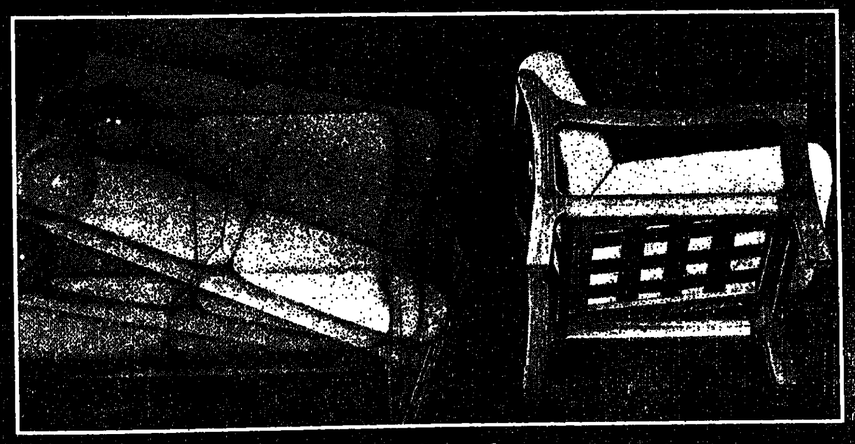

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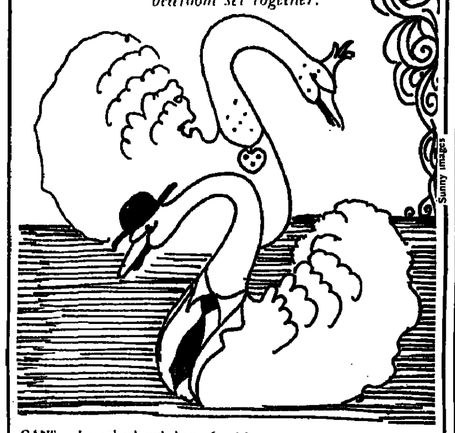

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A promise worth framing

Danit Landau

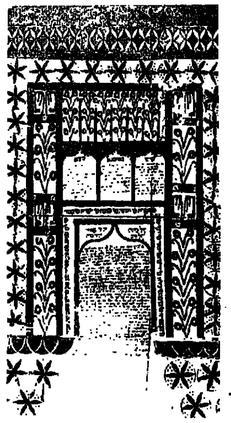
JEWS display remarkable extremes in their legal relationships. Diamond traders, dealing in highly expensive merchandise, write no contracts or guarantees, but seal their transactions with a hand-shake and a traditional verbal exchange, *mazal und brucha* — good fortune and blessing. There is an implicit sense of trust.

Yet, when a Jew takes a wife, places a ring on her finger and says: "Behold, with this ring, thou art sanctified to me according to the law of Moses and of Israel," it is not enough. He must also present her with a contract, a ketuba, duly signed by two witnesses.

Written in Aramaic, the ketuba sets down his obligations to work for her, to honour her, to support and maintain her in faithfulness and to provide for her a fixed sum from his estate in the event of her being widowed or divorced. The ketuba also states, *inter alia*, that the bride plighted her troth to the groom and consented to become his wife.

The ketuba is not, however, the kind of document to be filed away with a couple's mortgage agreement, insurance policies or other important papers. The ketuba is a promise worth framing. Over the centuries it has come to be a work of art, whose design and calligraphy may be an investment of considerable time and expense.

During the past few years, the artistic ketuba has enjoyed a popular revival, and some printing firms have been cashing in on the phenomenon by producing ketuba posters. These are not quite kosher within the framework of Jewish law,



Ketuba written in 1879

as terminology varies from place to place. Even in Israel, a Jerusalem ketuba does not contain exactly the same wording as a Tel Aviv ketuba.

Moreover, mass-produced ketubot are full of blank spaces for filling in the specific details of a marriage — the complete Jewish calendar date of the marriage; the name of the town, city and country in which the wedding was held; the Jewish names of the bride and groom and their fathers; the surnames of the bride and groom; and the hierarchal status of the families, whether Cohen, Levi or Israelite.

Filling in the missing information in your own hand-writing mars the ketuba's beauty. The version furnished by the rabbinate is not particularly aesthetic and also has those blank spaces to fill in. You can choose to buy a ketuba in which all details are complete, other than the signatures of the witnesses.

AT THE Ruth Matar Gallery in Jerusalem's Yemin Moshe, couples have a choice of 12 illustrated styles, inspired by, but not copied from, the exquisite Persian and Italian ketubot that have become museum pieces. There are also more modern examples, some depicting scenes of Jerusalem, surrounded by fertility symbols such as flowers, birds and fish.

The outlines of the ketubot are lithographs, but each is hand-painted, and the terms of the marriage contract are set down by a trained Tora scribe. Each style is produced in a limited edition of 613 — the number of precepts and commandments in the Tora.

Matar herself is a jeweller. A Holocaust survivor, she spent 30 years in the U.S. before moving with her family to Israel in 1977. Here she focused her attention on Jewish ceremonial objects, kiddush cups, spice boxes, candlesticks, mezuzot, etrog boxes, Tora pointers.

Inspiration for decorative themes was right outside her window — pomegranate trees, gnarled olive branches, grape vines, Jerusalem stone. She also constantly re-examines Jewish sources for motifs to work in sterling silver and 18-karat gold. Two of Matar's biggest successes are her Tree of Life mezuza and her pomegranate spice box, rising from a curved stem and encrusted with jewels. All her pieces are copyrighted.

DURING their five years in Jerusalem, the Matars befriended other craftsmen and artists and developed a keen interest in reviving artistic ketubot. Ruth Matar describes it as "a natural outgrowth of our interest in Judaica." They commissioned three artists to create the outlines and paint them, and a scribe, who also happens to be an artist, to write the texts.

"The ketuba seemed a natural," says Ruth Matar. "It has always been part of Jewish art, and it has been enjoyed by so many people for so many centuries."

Not everyone who comes to the gallery is initially aware of the ketuba display. People come in to buy ornate wine goblets to be used at the wedding ceremony; mezuzot for the new home; silver candlesticks for the bride; or matching wedding rings, and they then find that they can't take their eyes away from the framed ketubot lining the walls.

Available on fine quality paper or parchment, the ketubot mostly fall in the $195-$285 price range. Each is signed by the artist. A parchment ketuba is somewhat more expensive, and imitation parchment paper looks quite impressive. The ketubot are packed in scroll cases and can be shipped anywhere in the world.

For engaged couples, the Matars have an order form in which the couples are asked to consult with their rabbi as to the conditions to be listed in the ketuba, plus all the relevant information about names and dates. Just as some couples who want to reaffirm their vows buy new wedding rings, they also buy new ketubot. They present the Matars with a photostat of the original, indicate their style preference, and the artist and the scribe go to work.

The Matars themselves once wanted to give a friend a ketuba for a wedding present, but changed their minds when they were told that in this bride's family, it was not the bride to whom the ketuba was entrusted, but her mother. According to Halacha, the ketuba should remain with the couple. When the ketuba is a work of art and displayed with respect on a wall, it serves as a reminder of the more noble aspirations of marriage.

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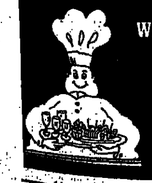

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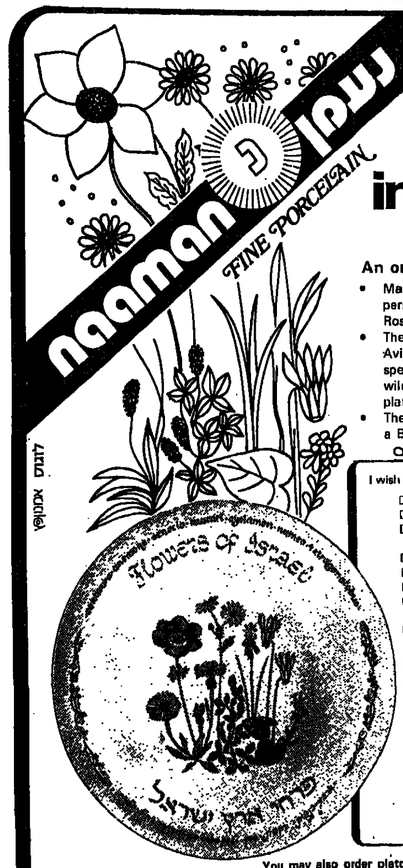

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- The plate is a mutual venture of Naaman and the Council for a Beautiful Israel.

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I wish to collect the plate, Flowers of Israel, at (mark x):

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☐ Solcoor 99 — Tel Aviv, 49 Rehov King George
☐ Auto Beylt — Tel Aviv, Kikar Hamedina, 70 Rehov Hei b'Iyar
☐ Naaman — Haifa, 8 Rehov Baerwald, Hadar Carmel
☐ Solcoor 99 — Haifa, Kikar Solel Boneh
☐ Solcoor 99 — Jerusalem, 3 Rehov Shlomzion Hamalka
☐ Solcoor 99 — Beersheba, Rehov Ben Zvi (opposite Egged)
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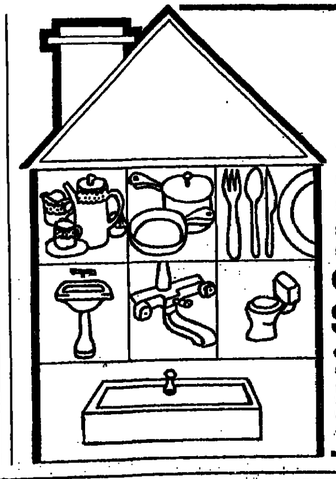
☐ "The President" plate	IS 297	☐ "Pesah" plate	IS 297

Number of plates limited. The number on your plate is determined by the date your order is received.



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Laughing all the way to the bank

GETTING MARRIED and setting up house in Israel can cost the equivalent of the young couple's earnings for five years or more, if they choose to have a wedding with all the trimmings and to buy a family-sized apartment instead of a two-room cubicle.

The expenses incurred are astronomical, and as most prices are quoted in relation to the dollar, each day a couple dallies in making up their minds is an added expense in shekels. Just take a look at some of the prices: wedding ring, $200-$5000; beauty parlour, $16-$40; bridal gown, $120-$350; bridal bouquet and floral arrangements for Chuppa and hall, $90-$150; bridegroom's suit, shirt, tie, etc. $250-$350; wedding invitations, $16-$200; photography, $120-$1,200; catering (per head), $8.50-$30; musical entertainment, $35-$500; and honeymoon, $350-$8,000. Then the young couple, if they can afford it, face the big expenses — $50,000 and upwards for an apartment and another $7,000 to $10,000 to furnish it.

Marriage can be a trap of debts. Help is at hand from Israel's banking houses, which provide attractive incentives for young couples to join specially devised programmes for savings, investments, mortgages and other bank transactions, plus discounts from 3 to 25 per cent on furniture, electrical appliances, musical instruments, tool kits, specified study courses, beauty treatments, clothing, literature, insurance premiums, video cassettes, honeymoons and vacations (including travel abroad), hire cars, jewelry, bridal attire, catering halls, sporting activities and more.

Bank Hapoalim started the ball rolling about a year ago with its *Pass Kahol* (blue stripe) club. Fifteen years or so ago, Bank Hapoalim began concentrating on certain groups within Israeli society with

Greer Fay Cashman

the object of establishing savings plans of mutual interest, to serve the needs of specific interest groups, while simultaneously boosting the business of the bank. Each group is given an identifying colour code, which helps to avoid bureaucratic tangles. For young couples, the colour is blue.

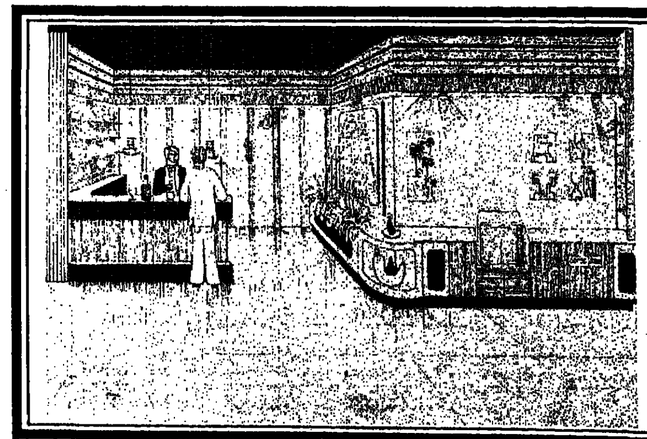
Considerable research and development went into the implementation of the plan. "We had to build a framework to solve the most pressing problems young couples face," says Bank Hapoalim spokesman Amnon Herzig, and this involved finding ways of easing banking procedures, establishing new and better terms for capital investments, increasing mortgage loans and persuading a wide network of retail and service agencies to give special discounts to members of the Blue Stripe club.

Joining is simple. The couple brings to any Bank Hapoalim two passport-style photos of each of them, which are used for their membership cards. The bank, in turn, presents the couple with a gift of an accordion file in which to file their important documents, and two complimentary personalized cheque books.

A detailed brochure lists all the benefits Blue Stripe members receive from the bank, shops, hotels, theatres, restaurants, sports clubs, etc. There is also a nine-point guide on marriage formalities — when, where and how to register; a table on mortgage rights according to area and points accumulated through army service; and some helpful hints about income tax.

Both Bank Hapoalim and the Hamashbir chain of department stores are Histadrut-owned enterprises, and members of the Blue Stripe club get a specially good deal at Hamashbir. Any goods purchased need not be paid for in full. Following an initial deposit, you can pay off the balance in four interest-free monthly instalments.

Hamashbir now has an additional service for all engaged couples, whether or not they belong to the club. They may give the store a list of gift preferences so their friends and relatives can be sure their wedding gifts will really be what the couple wants. Hamashbir will also give the couple its own wedding present worth 10 per cent of the goods purchased. If your wedding guests are generous in their giving, you could end up with a free carpet or an extra cupboard.



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Last year there were 130 weddings, 72 barmitzvahs and more than 100 other family affairs at the Dan Hotels. Each had its own special flair — and that's the way family affairs should be.

Whatever the occasion, the six Dan Hotels located in the principal tourist areas of Israel, will be happy to cater to your every need. The Dans will help you with:
All religious arrangements
Rooms
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Any special touch you might require
The use of all the facilities at the luxurious Dan Hotels

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Champagne breakfast in their room the morning after the wedding
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THE SERVICES and benefits Bank Hapoalim offers in its *Pass Kahol* programme include: a Bank-Kat card, enabling you to withdraw money when the bank is closed; an Isracard credit card; the right to overdraw up to IS5,000 on a favourable repayment plan; 120 current account transactions free of bank charges; individual free life insurance policies for bride and groom; purchase of travellers' cheques free of bank commission charges; discounts on bank charges for foreign currency and security investments; and unlinked supplementary mortgage loans and significant deductions in mortgage procedural costs through Bank Hapoalim's mortgage, Mishkan.

The ultimate benefit is Bank Hapoalim's Mikbatz Hanayad plan, probably the most flexible foreign currency savings programme in the country. Monetary wedding gifts are invested in a basket of foreign currencies, moving in one direciton or another, depending on changing values. The investment is interest-bearing, but unlike most foreign currency savings accounts, is not closed. Withdrawals are permitted, without affecting the interest rate on the balance.

Membership in the Blue Stripe club is limited to two years, but there is no age limit on participants. Septuagenarians who are newlyweds are classified as young marrieds in accordance with the date of their marriage, and not the date of their birth.

DVASH (honey) is a similar operation run by Bank Discount, with many of its advantages offered in conjunction with Kopel Tours. Up until October 15 of this year, *Dvash* members are entitled to free airline tickets to Rhodes or a $250 discount on organized overseas package tours, providing they make their travel arrangements through Kopel. The deal includes discounts on rental cars in Israel and abroad.

Bank Discount has a most informative booklet on catering arrangements; bridal hire services; printing costs of invitations; photography expenses; honeymoon options in Israel and abroad, including sea cruises; everything you should know about mortgages; how to go about selecting furniture; energy drains incurred by electrical appliances; budgeting for household expenses; and a list of discount possibilities around the country.

The duration of *Dvash* membership is 18 months, during which members can enjoy overlaps from other Bank Discount programmes. For instance, Mifalot Discount members get huge reductions on all kinds of entertainment, and for people who like to go out a lot, this will mean considerable savings on entertainment costs.

You can get a *Dvash* membership card by producing evidence of registration for marriage, or a marriage certificate issued not more than a year earlier than the day on which you apply to join *Dvash*. Your gift from the bank is an album for wedding or honeymoon photos. There are other honey-sweet benefits in the *Dvash* plan: 50 per cent discount on the fee for opening a mortgage file; 50 per cent discount on property evaluation fees; favourable five-year mortgage terms; supplementary mortgage loan with an easy repayment scheme; advantageous foreign currency investment plan; minimal bank commission on security investment transactions; 25 per cent discount on home insurance; two free cheque books; special overdraft privileges; 120 transactions free of bank charges; and the use of a Caspomat card.

Dvash honeymooners receive discounts of 10 to 20 per cent on hotel rates when they book through Kopel Tours.

BANK LEUMI makes togetherness worthwhile through *Shneimu Yahad* (the two of us together). The bank turns around the adage that two can live as cheaply as one, and gives its *Shneimu Yahad* programme the slogan "don't burden one shoulder with a load that two shoulders can carry."

Like the other big banks, Bank Leumi offers a variety of discounts. Its membership requirements for joining *Shneimu Yahad* are identical to those of *Dvash*, and its gift for the young couple is a folding mobile bar.

Opening a mortgage file is free of charge for *Shneimu Yahad* members, and other incentives include: 50 per cent discount of property evaluation fees; supplementary mortgage loan; rental loan of up to IS6,000; honeymoon loan to be repaid in monthly instalments over 12 months; 15 per cent discount on wedding rings in conjunction with Topaz Jewelry; investment of wedding gift monies free of bank charges and commissions; 50 per cent discount on bank charges for security investment transactions; four personalised cheque books free of charge; and two Caspomat cards free of charge.

Shneimu Yahad does not issue a membership card; the personalised cheque books are considered sufficient credentials.

Bank Leumi has a special arrangement with Rim Furniture; its newlywed club members pay 10 per cent less for all Rim products, and 5 per cent less on bargain offers.

Regrettably, the enticement brochure put out by Bank Leumi, printed in Hebrew, addresses itself primarily to the male of the species, posing the question whether "together" in its eyes refers to equal partners.

MORTGAGES usually prove to be a headache for the bulk of Israel's population, but never more so than when there is a delay in receiving the money needed to secure the key to an apartment. *Bo Beyom* is the no-delay programme devised by Bank Tefahot to enable applicants to receive a mortgage on the same day on which the request is made on condition that the applicants have done both their homework and their paper work.

If you are in a hurry for your mortgage, bring with you to Bank Tefahot the following: copies of your marriage certificate and identity cards; evidence of service in or official exemption from the army; proof of your housing rights; signatures of five guarantors, whose individual monthly income is more than IS4,000; a mortgage agreement in favour of the bank; an obligation on the part of the builder or land owner to sign the mortgage; notarized power of attorney; and in the case of the acquisition of a newly built apartment, a bill of sale.

Furnishing all these papers requires nerve-frazzling footwork, but there is comfort in knowing that the bank will pave the way from there on.

Deciding which young marrieds' scheme is the best is not easy. The schemes are similar in many ways, and yet each has certain advantages lacking in the others. However, no matter which you choose, it will work to your advantage.

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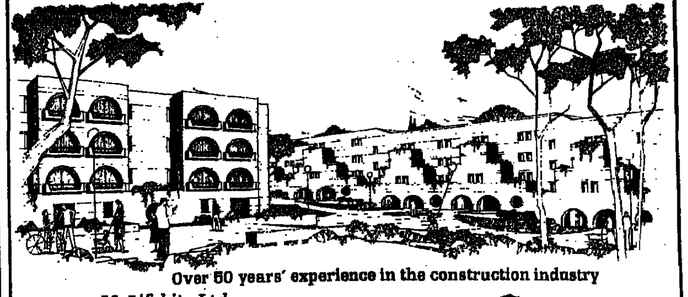

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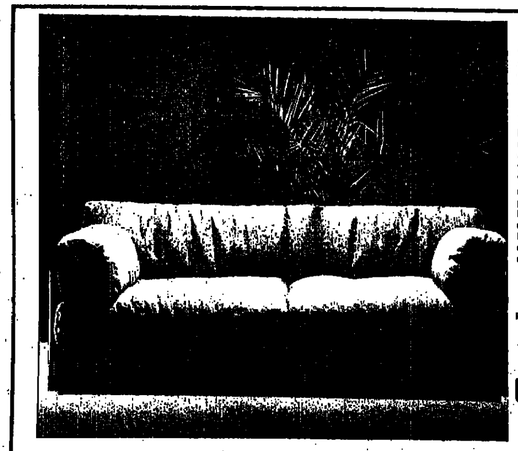

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Leonie Daniels

JULY, 1972. American immigrants Paul Rosenbaum and Roy Ginsbourg load up their equipment and make their way to a Tel Aviv synagogue. This is their first wedding assignment in Israel, and they want to do as good a photography job as they did in their native Philadelphia. The climate is against them. They feel stifled in their jackets, but a wedding is a wedding, and discomfort is par for the course. And then, culture shock: aside from the groom no one else wears a jacket.

"In America," recalls Rosenbaum, "no wedding photographer would dream of coming to a hall without a tuxedo."

There are other differences, and after ten years in Israel, Rosenbaum still can't get used to them all. His first jolt was to discover how much lower photography prices were in Israel. He was also shocked by the poor quality and the lack of professional interest.

"Photographers speak to one another professionally in America," he says. "In Israel, there is a business rapport, but no professional rapport. American photographers are happy to share techniques with each other, but Israeli photographers only want to talk about prices."

A former editor of the magazine of the American Professional Guild of Photographers and head of its

workshop committee, Rosenbaum tried to set up a workshop in Israel, but couldn't raise any interest. Hoping to start on a one to one basis, he invited Israeli photographers to his home to show them some of the techniques he had learned in America. His guests cared less about the technique than they did about how much he charged for that kind of job.

Rosenbaum's romance with photography began when he was 11. He had a mentor, an uncle who was a professional photographer with whom he worked on weekends and after school. Later, he studied at the Antonelli School of Photography in Philadelphia and at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art. He was a wedding photographer for 16 years before coming on aliya.

He quickly learned about the difference in tastes between America and here. Israelis were not too keen on studio photography. They haggled over the price, but bought up more candid shots than most American couples would ever think of buying.

In Philadelphia, Rosenbaum would spend up to eight or nine hours photographing a wedding. He would go to the bride's home at three in the afternoon to snap her among familiar surroundings. After the ceremony, he would whisk the couple and their attendants to his studio for formal shots and then on to the ballroom, where he usually finished shooting at 11 p.m., sometimes staying till after midnight.

As a rule, the Israeli bride does not require his services till 7 p.m., and because the ceremony and the reception are generally in the same place, he is involved in a minimal amount of running around. But he does a lot more walking, because

Israeli couples parade the hall and make frequent stops for group shots with guests. Americans are more inclined to reserve their group shots for family and very close friends.

Americans like their photographs to be 8"x10" for framing or 5"x7" for albums, Israelis tend to disdain large photographs. No one goes in for black and white or sepia wedding photos any more. Everyone wants colour.

Film, paper and chemicals are expensive, but Rosenbaum has been forced to drop his prices at his American Studios in Tel Aviv, even though his costs go up all the time. Cut-throat competition has forced prices down to the barest limits of profitability. "Photography is not a business any more," sighs Rosenbaum. "It used to be lucrative, but in Tel Aviv, the consumer is the winner."

MOONLIGHTING photographers don't have his overheads, so they can afford to charge less, but some are unscrupulous. Couples with no experience in dealing with photographers gleefully accept the cheapest deal, which offers them 100 prints at a ridiculously low figure. They are not shown any proof sheets, nor do they always get their prints on the date promised. Then they may receive the worst shots of all. "What about the chuppa and the head table?" they ask. "We saw you take those photographs. Why aren't they here?"

"Oh, if you want those" says the moonlighter, "you'll have to pay extra. Our deal was for a 100 photos and you've got them."

No reputable photographer would behave this way, says Rosenbaum. The accepted practice is to present the couple with contact sheets from which they make a selection. Any prints ordered in excess of the number originally agreed upon are charged for separately. The charge per print depends on size and whether the photographs are computer machine or hand-printed. The price range is between $1 and $5 per print. The price today for the 100 candid photographs is in the neighbourhood of $125.

Rosenbaum never takes a couple out on the beachfront for a backdrop of the Tel Aviv twilight. "That's for the moonlighters who have no studios," he comments. It wasn't his habit to take brides out on location in America either. "I can't imagine an American bride running out to the sea-side to get her hair all mussed up," he laughs.

The latest craze in Israel, he says, is for video weddings. "Sound movies are almost out. Everyone wants video." The price for capturing the happy day on a video casette can be as low as $160 and as high as $900. It depends on lighting, sound equipment, the size and number of cameras used, editing necessary and variety of special effects.

Rosenbaum uses a three-hour casette, but the average programme is between 1-1½ hours. "If you make it any longer, it gets boring," he says.

Besides the wedding itself done with special effects the video tape may include shots of the wedding photos of both sets of parents, the wedding invitation of the newlyweds, flashbacks of the bride and groom from babyhood to nuptials and close-ups. Though schmaltzy, such a casette is much more exciting than leafing through a family album.

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